

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 260

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS/ PINT, AF
SUBJ: ELECTIONS TO LOYA JIRGAH TO BE HELD

REFS: A) KABUL 9428; B) KABUL 7907

1. SUMMARY: THE GOVT OF AFGHANISTAN ANNOUNCED JAN 6 THAT ELECTIONS TO THE LOYA JIRGAH -- NATIONAL ASSEMBLY -- (TO CONVENE JAN 30) WILL BE HELD FROM JAN 9 TO 12. ALTHOUGH DELEGATE SELECTION IS SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW THE INDIRECT ELECTORAL PROCEDURES OF PREVIOUS LOYA JIRGAHS, WE EXPECT TO SEE CANDIDATES WHO HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY SELECTED AND SCREENED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR BEING "CONFIRMED" BY THEIR CONSTITUENCIES THROUGH UNSPECIFIED METHODS OF "POPULAR APPROVAL". APPROX 250 NATIONAL REPS WILL BE SELECTED THROUGHOUT AFGHANISTAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS ASSEMBLY. IN ADDITION TO THE "ELECTED REPS", MEMBERS OF THE GOVT, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, THE HIGH JUDICIAL COUNCIL, THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE, AND MILITARY OFFICERS AND OTHER PERSONS APPOINTED INDIVIDUALLY BY PRESIDENT DAOUD WILL PARTICIPATE, CREATING AN EXPECTED TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF ABOUT 400. IN ADDITION TO ATTENTION TO THE POLITICAL RELIABILITY OF THE PARTICIPANTS, WE EXPECT THAT CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO PROVIDE REPRESENTATION FOR THE

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MANY DISPARATE ELEMENTS OF AFGHAN SOCIETY. BESIDES ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ADOPTING A CONSTITUTION FOR THE REPUBLIC, THE LOYAH JIRGAH IS EXPECTED TO GIVE BORAD APPROVAL FOR THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE REPUBLICAN REGIME, INCLUDING FOREIGN POLICY. THE LOYAH JORGAH IS BEING LOUDLY TOUTED AS A POLITICAL EVENT OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE FOR AFGHANISTAN, BUT ITS "RUBBER STAMP" CHARACTER MAY MAKE THE JIRGAH

MORE USEFUL AS A MEANS OF CO-OPTING DELEGATES WHO WILL CARRY SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC BACK TO THEIR "CONSTITUENCIES" THAN AS A MEANS OF DEMONSTRATING A REAL NATIONAL CONSENSUS.
END OF SUMMARY.

2. GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (GOA) ANNOUNCED JANUARY 6 THAT ELECTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE LOYAH JIRGAH (CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DESCRIBED REF A) WILL BEGIN JANUARY 9 AND RUN THROUGH JANUARY 20. (THEY LOYA JIRGAH ITSELF IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN JANUARY 30, AND IS EXPECTED TO LAST APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK). APPROXIMATELY 250 NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES ARE TO BE "ELECTED", INCLUDING ONE FROM EACH OF THE "WOLESWALIS" AND "LOI WOLESWALIES" (NAMES OF TWO VARIETIES OF SUB-PROVINCIAL DISTRICTS), THREE FROM THE CITY OF KABUL, TWO EACH FROM THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS OF KANDAHAR, BALKH, NANGARHAR, HERAT, PAKTIA, KUNDUZ AND GHAZNI PROVINCES, AND ONE EACH FROM THE REMAINING EIGHTEEN PROVINCIAL CENTERS. ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT, ELECTION IS TO BE "IN ACCORDANCE WITH PREVIOUS JIRGAH ELECTORAL PRACTICE". RESEARCH ON THE LOYA JIRGAHS OF 1955 AND 1964 SHOWS A MIXED PATTERN OF DELEGATE SELECTION: INDIRECT ELECTIONS IN KABUL THROUGH A SERIES OF WARD SELECTIONS FOR ELECTORS WHO, IN TURN, NOMINATED CANDIDATES AND ELECTED JIRGAH DELEGATES; SELECTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BASED MORE ON CONSENSUS AND EMERGENCE OF A GROUP OF "NOTABLES". IN POINT OF FACT THE 1977 JIRGAH APPEARS TO BE MUCH MORE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED, WITH CANDIDATES SLATED FOR "ELECTION" ACTUALLY NAMED BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WITH APPROVAL OF SOME KIND EXPRESSED IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBSEQUENT LOCAL ASSEMBLAGES. ACCORDING TO ONE RANKING MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SOURCE "THERE WILL BE NO BALLOT BOXES, NOR ARE THE RULES GOVERNING THIS ELECTION PROCESS ANYWHERE WRITTEN DOWN".

3. IN ADDITION TO ELECTED DEPUTIES, THE LOYA JIRGAH WILL CONSIST OF:
-- MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (READ CABINET) AND THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (ONE ESTIMATE IS THAT THE MORIBUND "CENTRAL COMMITTEE" NOW INCLUDES ONLY THREE PERSONS WHO MIGHT NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE JIRGAH THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN ANOTHER CATEGORY);
-- THE CHAIRMAN AND FOUR MEMBERS OF THE HIGH JUDICIAL COUNCIL;
-- THE CHAIRMAN AND NINETEEN OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE;
-- MILITARY OFFICERS APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT;
-- OTHER PERSONS TO BE SELECTED AND APPOINTED

BY THE PRESIDENT.

REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP PROBABLY WILL BE ABOUT FOUR HUNDRED, BUT THE NUMBER COULD GO HIGHER. (THE 1964 LOYA JIRGAH HAD 452 ACTIVE MEMBERS.) THE JIRGAH IS RUMORED TO BE PLANNED FOR THE AUDITORIUM OF THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC HEALTH, IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE EMBASSY COMPOUND.

4. WHILE THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE LOYA JIRGAH IS TO APPROVE THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION PREPARED DURING 1976, SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE REITERATED DAOUD'S

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STATEMENT PROCLAIMING THE JIRGAH THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL BE ASKED TO APPROVE THE MAJOR POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE REPUBLIC, INCLUDING FOREIGN POLICY. (FOREIGN POLICY APPROVAL MAY PROVIDE PRESIDENT DAOUD WITH SANCTION FOR WHATEVER FURTHER INITIATIVES IN PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS HE MAY CHOOSE.) THE JIRGAH IS ALSO EXPECTED TO ELECT A NATIONAL PRESIDENT, MOST LIKELY MOHAMMAD DAOUD. (COMMENT: WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL JOB MIGHT GO INSTEAD TO A FIGURE-HEAD, WHILE DAOUD WOULD TAKE THE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLE AS PRIME MINISTER. THIS POLITICAL DEVICE MIGHT HAVE APPEAL AS A MEANS OF ASSURING A SMOOTH TRANSITION SHOULD DAOUD SUDDENLY DEPART FROM AFGHAN POLITICS, SINCE A PRESIDENT COULD ACT AS A CARETAKER WHILE A REPLACEMENT FOR DAOUD WAS

SELECTED. NEVERTHELESS, EMBASSY'S ESTIMATE IS THAT DAOUD WILL REMAIN HEAD OF STATE. END OF COMMENT) DAOUD PLANS TO MAKE A MAJOR ADDRESS TO THE LOYA JIRGAH, BUT THE TIMING HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED.

5. RECRUITING FOR A NEW NATIONAL PARTY (REPORTED REF B, PARA 2) CONTINUES BOTH IN THE MINISTRIES
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AND ON THE KABUL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, GIVING CREDENCE TO EXPECTATIONS THAT SUCH AN ORGANIZATION WILL BE ESTABLISHED BY THE ASSEMBLY ITSELF OR CONCURRENT WITH IT. (INDEED, THE PARTY MAY HAVE AN EXPRESS CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE TO PROVIDE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND DIRECTION FOR THE REPUBLIC.)

6. THE GOA HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT ALL BUT THE FIRST AND LAST SESSIONS OF THE LOYA JIRGAH WILL BE HELD "IN CAMERA". THIS DUPLICATES THE EXPERIENCE OF THE 1955 AND 1964 ASSEMBLIES, ALTHOUGH IN THE 1964 CASE AN EXTENSIVE DEBRIEFING ON EVENTS OF EACH DAY WAS HELD NIGHTLY FOR PRESS AND DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS. WE DO NOT EXPECT THAT A TEXT OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WILL BE RELEASED BEFORE ADOPTION BY THE JIRGAH.

7. THE 1977 LOYA JIRGAH IS BEING BILLED AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL EVENT YET TO TAKE PLACE IN THE AFGHAN REPUBLIC, AND, TO BE SURE, THE CONVOCAION OF ANY SUCH NATIONAL JIRGAH IS AN EVENT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. LOYA JIRGAHS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN CONVENED INFREQUENTLY, AND THEN ONLY TO TAKE NOTE OF EVENTS OF HISTORIC NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE. THE TWO MOST RECENT JIRGAHS WERE WIDELY REGARDED AS HAVING MADE EFFECTIVE POLITICAL DECLARATIONS, MORE OR LESS FREELY ARRIVED AT BY MORE OR LESS NATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE REPRESENTATION. FOR THE 1977 LOYA JIRGAH, ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO REPRESENTATION OF SOME SORT TO ALL OF AFGHANISTAN'S REGIONS, AND WE PREDICT THAT WHEN A FINAL LIST OF DELEGATES IS PUBLISHED, IT WILL SHOW THAT CARE HAS BEEN GIVEN ALSO TO REPRESENTATION FOR THE COUNTRY'S ETHNIC-LINGUISTIC-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES. THE JIRGAH WILL CERTAINLY BE NATIONAL IN CHARACTER, NOT A "PUSHTUN" SHOW
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NOR A "MOHAMMADZAI" CONVOCATION. WHAT WILL SUBTRACT FROM THE JIRGAH' EFFICACY WILL BE THE DEGREE IT WILL BE PERCEIVED TO HAVE BEEN TOTALLY RIGGED, TOTALLY CHOREOGRAPHED BY PRESIDENT DAOUD AND HIS REGIME. IN THIS CASE THE 1977 LOYA JIRGAH'S VALUE TO THE REGIME WILL DERIVE MORE FROM THE FACT THAT DELEGATES FROM ALL OVER HAVE BEEN CONVENED, ENTERTAINED AND TREATED TO SPEECHES BY THE BIG GUNS OF THE REPUBLIC. THEIR COOPTION AND WILLINGNESS TO CARRY THE GOSPEL OF THE REPUBLIC BACK TO THEIR HOME CONSTITUENCIES WILL BE THE MAIN BENEFIT DERIVED. IF A "NATIONAL CONSENSUS" IS TO BE ENGENDERED BY THE LOYA JIRGAH, IT WILL FLOW FROM KABUL TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AFTER THE JIRGAH ENDS, RATHER THAN DEVELOP AT THE CONVENTION ITSELF.
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